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Williams Named New Health Director

Gov. Mike Leavitt today appointed Scott D. Williams, M.D., as executive director of the Utah Department of Health. He fills the position vacated by Rod Betit, who is leaving to become the president of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association.

“Scott brings a stellar medical background and record of public service to the job,” said Leavitt. “He directed the Health Department’s 2002 Olympics planning and operations and has been instrumental in improving immunization rates and reducing tobacco use in our state.”

Dr. Williams, a pediatrician, joined the Utah Department of Health in 1993 as the director of the Division of Community and Family Health Services. In addition to overseeing programs designed to improve childhood immunization rates, reduce tobacco use, and decrease medical errors, he has also helped improve health outcomes and services for disadvantaged children and families.

“I am leaving the department in competent hands that are filled with experience and know-how to get the job done well,” said Betit, whose last day is today.

As executive director, Dr. Williams will oversee a \$1.4 billion budget that includes Medicaid, disease surveillance, laboratory services, emergency medical services, health facility and daycare licensing, maternal and child health, health promotion programs, health data analysis and vital records. The department has approximately 1,200 employees.

“I am looking forward to serving the people of Utah with an incredible team of dedicated men and women who are committed to preventing disease and providing access to needed health services,” said Dr. Williams. “We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in Utah’s twelve local health departments and the private health care delivery system to keep Utah at the top of the list of healthy states.”

Williams received his M.D. and M.P.H degrees from the University of Utah. He completed a pediatric internship at the University of Wisconsin and a pediatric residency at Primary Children's Medical Center in Salt Lake City. Prior to joining the Department of Health, he spent ten years as a full-time faculty member in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Utah as a general pediatrician providing care to the children of medically under-served American Indian families, migrant workers, and inner city residents.

Williams’ appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

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